



# Case Study: Mentoring Brings an Enhanced Focus on Accountability to Merchants Insurance Group

## Value Delivered

Improved on time project delivery to 80% resulting in one program booking \$100,000 of business in the first three days, and another program realizing 758% revenue growth in the first two months of introduction.

**Industry:** Property and Casualty Insurance

**Services Provided:** Mentoring and Coaching, Training, Project and Portfolio Management Process Development, PMO Development



**Company:** Merchants Insurance Group has been providing a variety of property and casualty insurance products for commercial and personal needs for over 90 years. The company operates in the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic and North Central United States and has a network of over 650 independent insurance agents.

**Challenge:** With a growing number of significant corporate initiatives underway involving technology and business resources that possessed differing levels of project management acumen, Merchants Insurance sought to invest in developing and applying consistent project and portfolio management practices across the organization. Scope management, issues handling, and determining true project and portfolio status were particular areas of focus for Merchants in their desire to continually improve business processes and better serve their agents and customers.

**Solution:** Merchants Insurance Group reached out to PM Solutions for suggestions on how it could execute and manage the company's growing number of projects most quickly and efficiently. PM Solutions recommended a targeted mentoring program for Merchants' Project Leads to provide one-on-one advice and coaching on how to apply consistent project management practices within the confines of their actual projects. Merchants welcomed the approach and engaged PM Solutions to support this program. The initiative was managed as a project, and PM Solutions quickly assembled an onsite team of experienced project management mentors to develop a customized solution and provide progress reporting to executive management, including the CEO. PM Solutions' Mentors used existing Merchants project and portfolio processes, procedures, and templates and incorporated elements of PM Solutions' own methodology when gaps or areas for enhancement were identified. Based on PM Solutions' experience designing, developing, and deploying different types of Project Management Offices (PMOs), PM Solutions also worked with Merchants to implement a PMO structure appropriate to its needs that would centralize project and portfolio operations.

"Merchants has benefited in several ways from its relationship with PM Solutions. Most importantly, we have gained an understanding of and appreciation for the project management discipline at all levels in the company. We've already seen positive impacts to our bottom line as a result."

~ Bob Zak  
CEO, Merchants Insurance

As part of the program, PM Solutions delivered a series of targeted workshops. A PM Basics Workshop was developed for Project Leads to introduce the essential components of project management, and an Executive Sponsor Workshop was tailored and delivered to executive management to provide an understanding of the value of project management, secure the appropriate support, and explain their role in project success. Individual Mentoring Plans were developed for every Project Lead, addressing the specific needs relative to the projects each was responsible for managing.

## Result:

Merchants Insurance Group has deemed the initiative a total success. Project Leads understand their role, are working more efficiently, and have true ownership of, and responsibility and accountability for, the projects they manage. As a result, 80% of projects are now delivered on time. Merchants' executives and senior management have an improved line of sight into the status of projects within their portfolio and a renewed confidence in their organization's ability to execute strategic initiatives effectively.

The mentoring and coaching provided by PM Solutions directly contributed to the successful introduction of the new Merchants Advantage Plus Gateway to the Business Owners Program. This was the first strategic initiative in recent years to be released as planned. On time introduction of

this program resulted in over \$100,000 of new business booked in the first three days, and a 70% increase in new business premiums in the first two months.

In the Personal Lines arena, a strategic decision was made to re-enter the marketplace with enhanced products and delivery methods. This program consisted of six major component efforts with a combination of product development and information technology deliverables. Using sound program and project management practices, the largest component (the new Flexible Choice Auto product in the states of New York and Pennsylvania) was successfully delivered resulting in 758% revenue growth in the first two months.